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Borough of Okehampton.



The Annual Report  
of the  
Medical Officer of Health  
and  
Sanitary Officer.

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1937.



## Public Health Staff :

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MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH,  
MEDICAL OFFICER FOR MATERNITY AND CHILD WELFARE CENTRE,  
SCHOOL MEDICAL OFFICER,  
E. D. ALLEN-PRICE, M.B., CH.B., D.P.H., BIRM.

SURVEYOR AND SANITARY INSPECTOR,  
R. ALAN BRUNSKILL, D.P., R.S.I.

MATERNITY NURSE,  
Miss B. HAMMOND,  
GENERAL TRAINED AND CERTIFIED MIDWIFE.

COUNTY COUNCIL HEALTH VISITOR,  
Miss E. M. RATA,  
STATE REGISTERED NURSE.      CERTIFIED MIDWIFE.  
HEALTH VISITOR'S CERTIFICATE.

## To the Okehampton Borough Council.

MR. MAYOR, ALDERMEN AND GENTLEMEN,  
I beg to submit my Annual Report for the year 1937.

The general health of the Borough remained very good throughout the year. Apart from tuberculosis serious notifiable diseases did not appear, and in some inexplicable way the influenza epidemic which ravaged the surrounding districts during the first quarter of the year failed to gain a hold in the Town.

It will be seen from the accompanying tables that the population is steadily rising, this rise regrettably is entirely due to migration from the surrounding districts, where the amenities of life are in no way commensurate with those afforded by this small Borough. It will be seen that the birth rate is 10.3 against a death rate of 12.8 per thousand. The majority of townsfolk live to a ripe age.

The Town, although giving one the impression by comparison with the heights of Dartmoor on the south of being in a hollow, is in reality well elevated. The lowest point is some 450 feet above the sea, and the higher reaches approach the 1000 feet level. Geologically the main part of the Town lies on an old river bed between the two Ockment rivers. The subsoil consists of river sand and coarse gravel intermixed with granite boulders. This applies also to the site of the Council Houses and the new site for further Council Houses. The higher reaches lie on shale of a very rapidly drying nature. This applies to the remainder of the Town with the exception of Crediton Road district where a weak clay mingles with the shale.

The natural amenities of the Borough are varied and interesting,—including the open reaches of Dartmoor on the south,—rapidly flowing rivers, well stocked with fish,—sports and pleasure grounds, offering amusements and exercise for all tastes, and a climate mellow, but at the same time bracing. It is surprising, considering the excellent bill of health, the longevity of the inhabitants, and the central geographical position, that the Town is not more used by convalescents and holiday makers.

The housing of the Borough was again the scene of activity. Five areas were, after an enquiry, declared for demolition.

The schools were regularly visited and from 358 children medically examined only 51 were found to be in need of treatment, a considerable number are still under-nourished, and 98 are in receipt of free milk and penny dinners. I am of opinion that the Town children are robust and generally healthy.

The milk supply once again was the cause of anxiety. An analysis of the results of milk testing shewed that the probability of milk passing the test was five times greater in the case of the accredited producer than the other without this license.



## General Statistics.

Area (statute acres)—806 acres.

Population, 1931 census—3307.

Estimated population, mid-1937—3587.

Number of inhabited houses—1005, an increase of 22 over the previous year.

Rateable value—£20,577.

Product of Penny Rate—£82.

## Vital Statistics.

	Male	Female	Total	England and Wales	
Live Births { Legitimate	18	16	37		
{ Illegitimate	3				
Birth rate per 1000 of estimated resident population—	10.3	14.9			
Still Births, Legitimate	...	...	2		
Still Birth rate ...	...	...	54	60	
DEATHS—Males 26 Females 20 ...	...	...	46		
Death rate per 1000 resident population	...	...	12.8		
Death rate after adjustments	...	...	10.7	12.2	
Deaths from puerperal causes	...	...	0.0	3.11	
Deaths of infants under one year	...	...	2		
Death rate of infants under one year	...	...	54	58	

The 46 deaths recorded of Townspeople during the past year were made up as follows :

Measles ...	...	0
Whooping Cough	...	0
Diarrhœa, under 2 years	...	1
Tuberculosis of Respiratory system	...	1
Other tuberculosis	...	2
Cancer ...	...	7
Cerebral hæmorrhage	...	2
Heart disease	...	14
Other circulatory diseases	...	2
Bronchitis ...	...	2
Pneumonia	...	1
Other respiratory diseases	...	0
Diseases of liver	...	0
Diseases of digestive system	...	0
Acute and chronic nephritis	...	1
Puerperal sepsis	...	0
Congenital debility, prematurity, etc.	...	1
Senility ...	...	1
Violence ...	...	5
Other defined diseases	...	5

Ages at which deaths occurred are shown in table below. Apart from an excessive infantile mortality, it will be seen that death occurs mainly in people of advanced age.

DEATH AGE TABLE.

Age.	Under 1 year.	1	5	15	25	35	45	55	65	75
Males	1	1	0	1	0	0	5	4	9	5
Females	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	7	8
	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	2	1	0	1	1	1	5	6	16	13

It will be seen that no death occurred amongst school children.

### Section B.

#### General Provision of Health Services.

(a) Laboratory facilities are supplied by Devon County Council for testing milk samples and analysing water samples. Also for examining bacteriological specimens of infectious cases. Good use was made of this service throughout the year.

(b) AMBULANCE FACILITIES.—An ambulance service is offered by a privately controlled ambulance stationed in Okehampton. The vehicle itself would appear reasonably accessible to all, but unfortunately the personnel is unqualified in ambulance work. This is regrettable, as a first-aid class is held in the Town each year and should be utilised by those in charge.

Infectious cases are carried to hospital by the Exeter City fever hospital ambulance. This service is very good.

(c) TREATMENT CENTRES AND CLINICS.—A school clinic is held in the Town once a week, and is well attended by children with minor ailments or who are in need of regular observation. Cases in need of treatment are referred to the practitioner in charge, and others who are merely delicate are referred to the open-air school at Torrington where they derive great benefit.

(d) HOSPITALS: PUBLIC AND VOLUNTARY.—The Town possesses a voluntary War Memorial Hospital with accommodation for 19 beds. The staff consists of matron, sisters, 2 staff nurses and 3 probationer nurses.

Other hospitals used are: (1) The Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital. (2) The Exeter City Fever Hospital for infectious diseases. (3) The Okehampton Public Assistance Infirmary. (4) Sanatoria for tuberculosis patients are maintained by Devon County Council at Hawkmoor and Barnstaple. (5) The nearest centre for the treatment of venereal disease is Exeter, twenty-three miles away.

(a) INSTITUTIONAL TREATMENT FOR MOTHERS & CHILDREN. This service is incomplete and only available in skeleton form at the Public Assistance Institution. A fully equipped hospital is needed to serve the Town and enormous rural area surrounding it.

(b) HEALTH VISITORS.—Health visiting is undertaken by a lady appointed by Devon County Council. She undertakes visiting newly-born babies and helping with advice, supervising the home treatment of tuberculous patients, inspection of school-children, etc., and I cannot but stress the importance of this work in maintaining a decent hygiene in the home, the care of mothers and the well-being of school-children.

(c) INFANT WELFARE CENTRE.—A very well attended infant welfare is held weekly where babies are weighed and mothers advised by the health visitor or myself. During the year the attendances were greatly augmented by the entry of people from outside the Town boundary, and the present accommodation is hopelessly inadequate.

The Hon. Sec. has submitted the following report for the year's working :—

I am glad to be able to report that the attendances at the Centre during the year were as follows:—Mothers 1291, Infants 719, Toddlers 916. Total 2926. These figures show a very satisfactory increase of 250 over the preceding year.

The committee have again been very enthusiastic in their endeavours to make the Centre progressively successful, and members have given all possible help in every way under the able guidance of the President, Mrs. T. H. Chamings, M.B.E.

During the year a very enjoyable Outing was held at Exmouth. The mothers and children, with some of the committee, spent a very happy day.

The thanks of the committee are due to the Mayoress for giving a Tea on April 15th.

MABEL A. CORNISH, Hon. Sec.

(d) ORTHOPÆDIC TREATMENT.—An Orthopædic Clinic is situate in the Town and draws cases from a radius of about 20 miles. Once a month a consulting orthopædic surgeon visits, and in the intervening weeks a nursing sister carries out instructions as regards treatment. The nursing staff are assisted by V.A.D. ladies. The clinic is run on a voluntary basis, but receives help from the Education Committee as regards school-children.



## Section C.

**Annual Report of Sanitary Officer, 1937.**

His Worship The Mayor, Aldermen and Councillors of the  
Okehampton Borough Council.

GENTLEMEN,

I have the honour of submitting my Annual Report for the  
year 1937.

**SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES.****WATER SUPPLY.**

SOURCES, ETC.—The sources of supply from Yes Tor Red-A-Ven Intake and Western Park spring supplies have remained unchanged, as for the past thirty-five years. Though both continued adequate throughout the year, the margin of reserve became very small towards late summer. No augmentation was made.

RAINFALL.—The rainfall during the year was slightly above the average. I am indebted to Councillor S. R. Harry and the late Mr. E. P. Burd for figures from which I make the following extracts of interest :

	1937	Average
Cranmere	84.9	77.5
Newbridge	60.1	65.3
Uplands	57.9	56.3

The driest months were June and August, and the wettest January and February. The following figures are arresting : 40% of the year's rainfall fell in January and February ; 51% in January, February and March alone ; while in the seven months May to November only 30% was available.

DISTRIBUTION AND ZONING.—Further developments, extensions and improvements in the system have been made during the year. Distribution mains have been extended and linked up in Park Row, Lopes Crescent and Market Street. New and supplemental connections numbered 29, and in addition a number of loop connections have been made, improving the supplies to various properties. Routine inspections for leaks revealed defects in consumers' pipes for which 41 notices were served, while 37 leaks were remedied on Corporation pipes. I have also introduced and used as far as possible during the past three years, new type stopcocks which are connected direct on to the mains, and thus enable service pipe repairs to be carried out without the necessity of emptying the main. This is a great convenience and improvement on the old type.



The zoned distribution system was in operation throughout the year, and has now been working continuously for nearly two years. Providing a practically continuous day and night supply throughout the area, it has worked almost trouble-free and with the least possible attention during the whole of this period. First impressions of its efficiency have been more than confirmed. In midsummer it had its greatest test up to date, when, owing to a temporary failure in the main intake supply, it succeeded in supplying most of the Town for the greater part of two or three days from an almost empty reservoir.

It is also most interesting to note the effect of the new system on maintenance work, both to the Corporation and to consumers. An astounding reduction in the number of leaks with an equivalent saving on repair costs is revealed by the following figures, which show the number of leaks on consumers' pipes for the last year before zoning, and for 1937.

1935 (April—November)	126
1937 do.	28

This big improvement is largely due to the fact the new system enables pressure in the central low level zone to be maintained at a constant level, whereas formerly there was a variation of as much as 100lbs. per square inch.

In conclusion, may I add these revealing facts. During the past nine years the following extensions and additions have been made to the distribution system. They have, as the figures show, brought with them an enormously increased load, on what was, nine years ago, considered an overloaded and insufficient supply.

Length of new mains	2½ miles.
New connections (approx.)	300
New taps do.	1500

These figures leave no further comment necessary.

**RIVERS AND STREAMS.**—The two rivers through the district are rapid flowing, self-cleansing and generally very clean. Lack of rainfall during latter part of year caused them to become low, but without ill effect. Some improvement is noted in the reduction of solid rubbish but there is still room for further improvement.

**DRAINAGE AND SEWERAGE.**—Sewerage works have been well maintained throughout the area and no serious defects have arisen. All are periodically inspected and flushed. Special works have included extensive repairs to the West River main sewer, construction of a new sewer to replace one old and defective between Park Row and St. James' Street, and the making up and re-shaping of distribution channels at the disposal works.

**PUBLIC CLEANSING.**—Refuse collection and disposal and street cleansing are carried out exclusively by the Corporation's own workmen and vehicles. Collection is daily in the central area and bi-weekly in the outskirts. Disposal is by regulated tipping three-quarters of a mile from the town centre. A rat catcher is regularly employed with traps, dogs and poison, and maintains satisfactory control over the rodents.

Further progress has been made in the provision of bins to replace the former unsatisfactory and insanitary receptacles, 291 replacements, an increase of 21 having been made. In addition, a new manual street orderly has been provided, thus enabling much improved and more regular street cleansing to be maintained.

SANITARY INSPECTION.—The following are particulars of visits :

Houses	...	34
Houses— <i>re</i> housing	...	36
Drainage	...	35
Sewerage	...	14
Water Supply	...	42
Rivers	...	7
Refuse Removal	...	37
Tip	...	17
Tents and Vans	...	2
Schools	...	6
Offensive Trades	...	4
Infectious Diseases	...	8
Miscellaneous	...	18
Informal Notices	...	27
Remedied	...	24

SMOKE ABATEMENT.—In two instances complaints were remedied by informal action. The general standard has been good.

SWIMMING POOLS.—The Town swimming pool is just without the boundary, and circulation is partly maintained by a spring water supply.

FISH FRYING.—There are now three establishments, all of which have been well maintained and conducted.

OFFENSIVE TRADES.—Two establishments—manure works and marine store, have been fairly well maintained and no complaints have been received.

## Section D.

### Housing.

RE-HOUSING.—The first re-housing estate at Maceys Terrace, North Road, consisting of 26 houses, was completed in 1936, and the whole of the 29 houses in the six clearance areas it displaced have been demolished.

Further proposals, covering five additional areas with 14 houses, were investigated and completed. These were the subject of an Enquiry held by the Minister of Health in October, and the orders were subsequently confirmed by him in their entirety.

Negotiations have been completed for the purchase of a further site at Bray Hams, North Road, whereon it is proposed to erect a further 14 houses for re-housing the tenants from these areas, together with two additional houses for the relief of overcrowding.

NEW HOUSES.—The number of new houses erected during the year were as follows :

By Local Authority	...	0
By Private Enterprise	...	22

The latter is two more than last year, and remains about the average.

#### INSPECTION OF DWELLING HOUSES.

1.	(1)	(a)	Number inspected	...	...	36
		(b)	Inspections	...	...	70
	(2)		Number recorded	...	...	14
	(3)		Number dangerous or injurious	...	...	14
	(4)		Number not reasonably fit	...	...	10
2.			Number rendered fit by informal action	...	...	9
3.			Action under Statutory Powers.			
		(a)	...	...	...	None
		(b)	...	...	...	None
	(1)	(c)	Number of houses in respect of which demolition orders were made	...	...	None
	(2)		Number demolished	...	...	11
		(d)	...	...	...	None
4.			Housing Act, 1935. Overcrowding.			
	(a)	(1)	Number of dwellings overcrowded	...	...	10
		(2)	Number of families therein	...	...	10
		(3)	Number of persons therein	...	...	70
	(b)		New cases	...	...	—
	(c)		Number relieved	...	...	5
			Number of persons	...	...	25
	(d)		...	...	...	None
	(e)		...	...	...	None

HOUSING (RURAL WORKERS) ACT, 1926.—Further progress under this Act has included the reconstruction of six additional cottages, which were almost completed at the end of the year. These six are an outstanding example of the advantages and purposes of this most useful section of housing legislation, which many more small property owners might take advantage of, to the mutual benefit of themselves and their tenants.



## Section E.

**Inspection and Supervision of Food.**

MILK SUPPLY.—Bacteriological examination of milk under the Devon County Council Scheme has been regularly carried out. Seven producers supplying milk in the Borough are Accredited. They are distributed as follows: Two produce and retail in the Borough; Three produce in the rural area and retail in the Borough; Two produce in the rural area and supply wholesale in the Borough.

The following are statistical particulars of the samples and results:

	Total		Ordinary Producers		Accredited Producers	
Total Samples	76		47		29	
Number Passed	46	60%	23	48%	23	80%
Number Failed	30	40%	24	52%	6	20%

Eight of the ordinary failed samples were from two producers.

I supply each producer and retailer with copies of the County Bacteriologist's Reports in card form. Consumers in doubt should ask their retailer to produce this certificate, which for satisfaction should record a "Passed" sample not more than four months old.

Inspections were as follows: Dairies 72; Cowsheds 37. Some improvements have been made and condition is generally satisfactory.

MEAT AND OTHER FOODS.—Slaughterhouses and meatshops have been well maintained. Shops have all glass fronts and transport is satisfactory.

Bakehouses have been kept in a generally satisfactory condition.

DISINFECTION.—Disinfection by formalin fumigation has been carried out in the following cases:

Tuberculosis	...	3
Diphtheria	...	1 (motor bus)
Scarlet Fever	..	1
Puerperal Fever	...	1
Other Cases	...	2

In conclusion, I would thank the Mayor and Members of the Corporation, the Town Clerk and Medical Officer of Health for their co-operation in their respective spheres of service during the year.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

**R. ALAN BRUNSKILL,**

Borough Engineer and  
Sanitary Officer.



## Section F.

## Prevalence of and Control over Infectious and other Diseases.

Diseases in this class, apart from tuberculosis, were non-existent.

TUBERCULOSIS.—Eight new cases were notified during the year and three deaths were recorded from this disease. On Dec. 31st, seven males and nineteen females residing within the Borough were suffering from the disease.

The following table shows the distribution of the new cases and deaths :

Age periods	NEW CASES.				DEATHS.			
	Pulmonary Male	Non-Pulmonary Female	Pulmonary Male	Non-Pulmonary Female	Pulmonary Male	Non-Pulmonary Female	Pulmonary Male	Non-Pulmonary Female
Under 1 year								
1—5 years								
5—10 „		1						
10—15 „								
15—20 „								
20—25 „		1		4		1		
25—35 „	1							1
35—45 „								
45—55 „	1							
55—65 „								1
65 „								
Total ...	2	2	0	4	0	1	0	2

## Factories, Workshops and Workplaces.

### 1.—INSPECTION OF FACTORIES, WORKSHOPS AND WORKPLACES.

Including inspections made by Sanitary Inspectors or Inspectors of Nuisances.

Premises	Number of			Occupiers prosecuted
(1)	Inspections (2)	Written Notices (3)		(4)
Factories ... (Including Factory Laundries)	38	2		Nil
Workshops ... (Including Workshop Laundries)	14	1		Nil
Workplaces ... (Other than Outworkers' premises)	2			Nil
Total ...	54	3		Nil

2.—DEFECTS FOUND IN FACTORIES, WORKSHOPS AND  
WORKPLACES.

Particulars			Number of Defects			
			Found	Remedied	Referred to H.M. Inspector	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)			
<i>Nuisances under the Public Health Acts :—</i>						
Want of cleanliness	...	...	1	1	Nil	
Want of ventilation	...	...	Nil	Nil		
Overcrowding	...	...	Nil	Nil		
Want of Drainage of floors	...	...	Nil	Nil		
Other nuisances	...	...	1	1	Nil	
Sanitary accommodation	{	insufficient	...	Nil	Nil	
		unsuitable or defective	1	1	Nil	
		not separate for sexes	Nil	Nil		
Total			...	3	3	Nil

In concluding, I would like to thank the Mayor and Corporation for the ready hearing always afforded me, and the interest taken in my proposals.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

**E. D. ALLEN-PRICE.**

May 27th, 1938.



